



# Report Highlights

## Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services

### Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program - Employment and Training

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## Why We Conducted This Audit

We conducted this audit in response to House Resolution 248 of the 2022 Regular Legislative Session, which requested the Louisiana Legislative Auditor's office to conduct an audit of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), inclusive of the SNAP Employment and Training (SNAP E&T) program. This report focuses on the SNAP E&T program, while two previously-published reports focused on the administration of the SNAP program in general and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on SNAP. The Food and Nutrition Act established SNAP to provide nutrition support for low-income individuals and families and also requires states to provide employment and training services to eligible SNAP recipients. According to the United States Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Services (FNS), effective SNAP E&T programs promote access, remove barriers, and effectively support all participants to ensure they gain the skills and credentials needed to succeed at new and better jobs.

## What We Found

- **DCFS has increased the number of SNAP E&T providers of voluntary services from four in federal fiscal year (FFY) 2018 to 29 in FFY 2022, resulting in the number of parishes with in-person providers of voluntary SNAP E&T services increasing from 12 to 42. However, not all SNAP recipients have in-person access to the program, as 22 (34.4%) of 64 parishes with 155,698 adult SNAP recipients do not have in-person SNAP E&T services available to them.** In addition, most SNAP E&T providers specialize in serving certain populations, such as a certain age group, which further limits who can receive SNAP E&T services.
- **The number of total SNAP E&T participants decreased 93.0%, from 19,628 in FFY 2018 to 1,370 in FFY 2022 because the program became voluntary in October 2020. However, the number of voluntary SNAP E&T participants increased 181.9%, from 486 to 1,370 over the same timeframe. SNAP E&T expenditures increased from \$1.8 million in FFY 2018 to \$8.3 million in FFY 2022, in part due to an increase in the number of providers and, according to DCFS, because of federal requirements that case management services be provided.** The 100% federal funds used to pay for administrative costs related to the planning, implementation, and operation of the program totaled at least \$10.3 million during this five-year timeframe. This funding was used for state agency administration of the program, marketing, computer system upgrades, and administrative costs for third-party providers.

The **purpose** of the SNAP E&T program is to help SNAP recipients gain skills, training, work, or experience to increase their ability to obtain regular employment, with the ultimate **goal** of becoming financially self-sufficient.

SNAP E&T offers a way for SNAP recipients to meet work requirements stipulated in federal law through SNAP E&T programs that may assist participants in job searches, job skills training, education, and work experience, and provide supportive services like transportation and childcare to help reduce barriers to employment and training.

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### What We Found (Cont.)

- **As of FFY 2021, SNAP E&T consisted of five components in Louisiana, and the most commonly offered and provided component was job search training. While supportive services such as transportation and childcare are important to the success of SNAP E&T participants, more than half of participants did not receive supportive services through the SNAP E&T program.** For example, only five participants received childcare assistance, and only one participant received temporary housing assistance in FFY 2021 despite more than half of SNAP E&T providers indicating these are common challenges to serving participants.
- **Federal performance outcome measures reported by DCFS show mixed results during FFYs 2018 through 2021. For example, median quarterly wages after program completion increased from \$3,225 in FFY 2018 to \$3,614 in FFY 2021, but the percentage of participants completing components decreased from 70.0% to 40.8% over this same time. DCFS could better evaluate the effectiveness of components and providers by requiring performance outcome measures and targets in contracts and evaluating whether providers achieve those targets.** While the purpose of SNAP E&T is to increase SNAP recipients' ability to obtain regular employment with the goal of becoming financially self-sufficient, neither FNS nor DCFS have developed specific targets for what defines "success" in the program. In addition, 18 (60.0%) of 30 providers we reviewed for FFYs 2021 and 2022 did not have performance outcome measures even though DCFS policy requires that contracts contain specific, objective, and quantifiable measures.
- **While DCFS performs federally-required monitoring of the SNAP E&T program, it could enhance its oversight and identify potential instances of non-compliance by analyzing service and expenditure data on a routine basis. We found that costs to serve participants varied greatly by provider and that some participants exceeded the amount of services they could receive or received duplicative services from multiple providers.** The average cost per participant for the SNAP E&T program was \$4,559 in FFY 2021, ranging by provider from \$225 to \$35,664. In addition, we found that 25 (33.8%) of 74 participants who received job retention services received them for longer than allowed, which is prohibited by federal law. We also identified 21 instances where nine participants received the same component during the same month from different providers.